

something to be said for that, but it's not enough. And I want you to take just one moment to be serious before I go. I want you to just ask yourself, now or when you leave, to take a few moments to think about everything you can think about about your country today, all the good and the things that you think are not so good, and then say, "What would I like America to look like when my children or my grandchildren are my age? What do I want America to be like 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now?"

We are going to walk across a bridge into the next century beginning with this election. And it's not like 1992 where you can say credibly, this is change against the status quo. That's not so. There is no status quo option. These are two very different visions of how we should walk into the 21st century and what kind of bridge we should build to go there. And the decisions we make will profoundly affect what America looks like when your children and your grandchildren are your age.

Now, in the end, that matters more than all the petty concerns we might have. It matters more than even the immediate and serious personal concerns we might have. Because in the end, for the same reason you decided to commit your careers to education, our fundamental obligation is to maintain and strengthen this country. And we have never been able to do it except by broadening opportunity and by bringing more and more people together, by breaking down the barriers of bigotry and prejudice and fear and bringing this country together in this vast melting pot of freedom that is the most remark-

able experiment in self-government in all of human history. We are being given an historic responsibility now, you and I, to pick which bridge we're going to walk into the 21st century. And that will determine what this country will be like when our children and grandchildren reach our age.

So, what I want to ask you to do is to go beyond the preaching to the saved. I want to ask you to walk out this hall determined, with all your other responsibilities and all your other pressures and all the challenges of the classroom and the schoolhouse, to spend whatever time you can between now and November talking to your family, your friends, people who don't work with you every day, people who don't have the same insight you may have into what goes on here, about these big questions.

Because I believe with all my heart, if the American people are given back this choice, if they get to look at the big things, not the divisive, distractive, destructive, puny elements that too often dominate our politics, the American people will do what they've been doing for over 200 years; they will make the right decision. And your children and your grandchildren will be the richer for it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Keith Geiger, outgoing president, and Bob Chase, incoming president, National Education Association; and Terry Dozier, former Teacher of the Year and Special Adviser to the Secretary of Education.

Statement on the Russian Presidential Election

July 3, 1996

As we wait to receive the final results of the Russian elections, and as our Nation prepares to celebrate our own freedom and independence, I want to recognize the historic significance of what we have seen in Russia today.

From Vladivostok to Kaliningrad, tens of millions of Russians returned to the polls to complete the process of selecting their President. The Russian people can take real pride in this

extraordinary achievement. After centuries of imperial rule and decades of Communist oppression, they have asserted their right to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. This election process shows just how far Russia's political reform has come over the last 5 years.

The American people can take pride as well in our steady support for Russia's democratic reform. As the results are counted, we will

shortly learn the choice of the Russian people. But one thing is clear: Today was a triumph for democracy in Russia.

Statement on Signing the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 *July 3, 1996*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3525, the "Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996," which will make it easier to prosecute those who set fire to churches. I applaud the Congress' swift, unanimous, and bipartisan passage of this bill. I have signed it promptly upon its transmittal to me so that the new law can go into effect as soon as possible, but I plan to acknowledge the Congress' role more formally and discuss

the importance of this measure at an appropriate occasion next week.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 3, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3525, approved July 3, was assigned Public Law No. 104-155.

Memorandum on the Western Power Outage *July 3, 1996*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Energy

Subject: Western Power Outage

Yesterday, there was an unexplained power failure in the Western power grid, disrupting electric service to hundreds of thousands of customers in 15 Western states. The outages had a ripple effect as power stations across the vast grid automatically shut down as the result of experiencing a surge. The outages caused numerous problems throughout the region, including disruptions of train service, traffic problems, loss of air conditioning, interruption of telephone service, and interference with water supplies.

I direct you to provide to me a report within 30 days, that:

1. Analyzes the cause of yesterday's outage;
2. Describes the extent and duration of the outage;

3. Analyzes whether the outage could have been prevented and whether the Western Systems Coordinating Council (WSCC) electric reliability system responded as anticipated to the initial outage;
4. Makes recommendations for any operational or regulatory changes at WSCC; and
5. Assesses the adequacy of existing North American electric reliability systems and makes recommendations for any operational or regulatory changes.

I have directed that these steps be taken to assure the reliability of the Nation's electricity infrastructure. A steady supply of power is a vital factor in both the local and national economies and is essential for the safety of all Americans. The swift implementation of this directive will assure that these interests will be protected.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON